

thecourt

April / May 2020

THE SPRING ISSUE



BACK ON THE MAP

Meet the new Earls Court
developer

DOING THE BUSINESS

The New Earls Court Business
Forum

PRIDE IN THE COURT

Social History Project Launches



Keeping
Life Local



Stay Positive. Look Ahead. Keep Connected.

Our streets and garden squares may be eerily quiet right now, but the area is positively blooming, filled with cherry blossom and magnolia - nature's way of telling us that life goes on and a fresh new season has begun. And so, even in these challenging times, a sense of seasonal newness prevails.

Over the coming months, we promise to be with you all the way - keeping you in touch with local news and things to do while we ride the storm, together.

The Court's team will be telling you about ways to stay connected, how to volunteer to support people in need, and also how you can tune into our podcasts and video conference meetings so that we can all stay engaged and connected.

Combined mental and physical wellness are essential, and helping you get through these restrictive times is be top of our agenda in the issues ahead. Go to www.thecourt.london to sign up for our KEEPING LIFE LOCAL newsletter - our weekly email update will share details of local initiatives and ways to stay in touch.

The Spring Issue

In this Spring Issue we meet the man heading up the business team that will oversee the development of the Earls Court Exhibition site. The goal? To make Earls Court an iconic residential and cultural destination once again. We hear how we can have some influence on the new masterplan, and help make that happen.

We also get a chance to meet the head of the area's new Business Forum - working with local businesses to support promotional efforts, Sam Knight and his team offer practical advice on how to keep life flowing for the local economy. Remember folks - it is really, really important that we support our local businesses at this time as many will seriously struggle in the coming months.

Smaller scale successes also abound as the new year progresses, and community life quietly remains alive and well, albeit more virtually than face-to-face. At 1A Nevern Place, the headquarters of the Earls Court Community Trust, we speak to a charity that is helping the lives of the Somali community here in our area.

In the hope that the current Covid 19 virus will subside over the summer months, our local theatre group, The Earls Courtiers, are positively making ready for a summer season of outdoor theatre in the gardens. Auditions for *Into The Woods* by Stephen Sondheim, with Toby Brown and Ingie Marks at the helm, have commenced, and in response to the PM's request for social distancing, digital video auditions for local star talent are starting this week.

And finally, The Court tells you more about a fascinating social history initiative. Focusing on the collation of stories, photos, and the recording of audio and video of interviews with those that remember the neighbourhood's gay scene from the 1960s onwards, Linda Wade launches a history project that is set to capture the halcyon days of Earls Court's legendary scene.

In the face of the current virus challenges, we sincerely hope you and yours are safe and well. Challenges aside, the world still turns and it is really important to look ahead and focus on the positive things that are happening in our community. Please do always think local, and support those that need us most.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The Earls Court Developers Reach Out

It seems that the new owners of the Earls Court development are determined to bring the former site of our much loved Exhibition Centres back to life, and in the coming weeks a dedicated project team led by Delancey - a London-based, property investment, development and asset management advisory firm - will kick start an ambitious period of local consultation and project planning. *The Court* caught up with Stafford Lancaster, Investment Director at Delancey, to learn more.

Q: What do Delancey plan on doing with the Earls Court development that better meets the needs of our local area?

A: Firstly, I want to start by saying how excited we are to have the opportunity to take the development forward. Earls Court's unrivalled connections, location and scale mean that it has the potential to be a world leading scheme and we cannot wait to be part of that.

It is still early days and we're just at the start of a big conversation between everyone involved and interested in the development. We need to take the time to understand what is important to all stakeholders to help guide what is ultimately delivered in Earls Court. We are also in the process of recruiting an Earls Court based senior management team for The Earls Court Development Company, who will have day to day responsibility for driving the project forward alongside the local community.

What is clear at this point is that we do not intend to pursue the existing detailed planning consent. Instead we'll move towards a brand new masterplan that seeks to knit back in a London landmark location, creating an energised commercial destination and vibrant residential community.

We want to return Earls Court to Londoners and allow it to thrive once again alongside all its neighbours. A new vision must be totally inclusive of the views of the local community and cutting edge in terms of its positive environmental and social impact.

Q: Will you continue to support arts and culture initiatives in this important part of London?



A: Absolutely. We will carefully consider how the long-term vision for Earls Court captures and nurtures creative talent and enterprise within it. We are well aware that Earls Court has a vibrant cultural history and we share your ambition in ensuring that it remains that way.

Q: Do you have any plans for the Spring as regards community outreach or information / Open Day style events?

A: We have now begun our initial community engagement and outreach. Our very first community open morning took place on Saturday 7th March and was a great success. It was brilliant to meet some of our neighbours and hear their views on how we can work together and collaborate with the community moving forward. For anyone that did not make it along, or if your readers have any questions, they can get in touch by contacting info@theearlscourtdevelopmentcompany.com, or by calling the dedicated helpline on 0330 333 1510. We'll also be hosting another open day event later this summer so keep an eye out for more details.

The Court will also be keeping you updated on developments with The Earls Court Development Company. Contact editorial@thecourt.london if you have any comments on this story or if you would like to share your thoughts on the project and potential ways to develop it.

The Earls Court Development Company

About Delancey and Earls Court

Delancey purchased Capco's interests in Earls Court in November 2019, and did this on behalf of its client fund and APG. They are working with Transport for London (TfL), whose ownership interests in the project remain the same, to bring forward one of the most important mixed-use developments in London.

Less about luxury living and more about creating a vibrant destination, it seems that the company is heading back to the drawing board to create a plan that is better designed for success. The goal? To create a culturally rich place to live, and get Earls Court firmly back on the tourist and business traveller map as soon as possible.

EARL'S COURT BUSINESS FORUM – *Doing The Business*

BY SAM KNIGHT

Businesses in Earl's Court are forming a new network to discuss how to address challenges and opportunities facing the local area.

The first meeting of the business forum took place on 23 January, with a range of local business representatives in attendance, placemaking consultancy The Means, and the new owners of the site Delancey, kindly hosted the event. The Means were appointed by the Council during the latter half of 2019 to engage local businesses and facilitate the development of a local business forum. They presented findings from more than 90 interviews with Earl's Court businesses about local priorities and areas of interest. Three key themes were identified for roundtable discussion, one of which was the desire for a supportive environment for local businesses.

When asked about their biggest challenges, many businesses cited uncertainty and costs relating to Brexit, rents or rates. Others spoke about support with licensing or having more information about what is happening in the area. This translated into an appetite to see an independent business forum that could represent the views of businesses, provide regular communication, and coordinate action.

Discussion about the creation of a business forum appears to be timely. In December 2019, Delancey, on behalf of its client fund and APG saw the acquisition of Capco's interests in the Earl's Court development site. While this sale has unlocked some long-standing sticking points, such as the return of two housing estates to Hammersmith and Fulham Council, it will likely result in a new planning application and, consequently, a new consultation process. An organised business forum is one way of ensuring there is a representative business voice and good communication about progress and consultation opportunities.

Other areas discussed were businesses' interest in the identity of the wider Earl's Court area and how to attract customers. For some this centred on what would fill the identity gap left by the Exhibition Centre; others focussed on whether the current business mix is attractive to consumers.

The common theme was to agree and pull together behind a vision and activities that build on Earl's Court's assets and give people a clear reason to visit. Suggested activities included, for example, a festival that builds



on the variety of cuisine in Earl's Court, or pop-up uses of accessible parts of the development site.

A discussion about Earl's Court's public environment revealed suggestions around cleanliness, anti-social behaviour, and traffic. The businesses brainstormed ideas for short- and long-term projects to address these issues, such as jet washing of specific 'grot spots' and better streamlining of commercial waste services to help save costs and ease the number of delivery vehicles coming into the area.

Finally, a discussion took place about the possible role of a business forum for Earl's Court. A key comment about the forum was that it "needs to contain real outputs and benefits for business that happen quickly, not just be a talking shop". As such, a number of businesses volunteered to be part of a steering group to develop delivery proposals further.

There will be more forum events in the future and all Earl's Court businesses are encouraged to get involved. For more information or for details of future meetings contact earlscourt@themeans.co.uk.

PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

Do You Want To Learn Italian?

Parli Italiano?

Words at Hand School was established by Cristina Boscaino in response to the growing demand for Italian language learning in our community. We offer General Italian language classes and courses in preparation for the CILS B1 CITTADINANZA exam, which is now compulsory to apply for Italian citizenship through marriage. After assessing your language level and goals, we'll be able to advise you on which is the best course for you to join. Our Italian native tutors are all trained to teach Italian to non-native speakers and have teaching qualifications as well as experience with language exam preparation.

If you would like to learn more about our Italian courses, contact Cristina on 07824 347667 or contact@italiancourses.london. Visit www.italiancourses.london for more details.

We also offer certified translation and legalisation services through our partner business, Words at Hand (cristina@wordsathand.com).



Learn How to be Seen Online & Generate New Business Leads

Do you work from home or are you planning to return to the job market?

Local marketing and communications company, Vox Digital is running a series of training sessions (broadcast online from 1A Nevern Place) on Tuesday mornings 10:00-12:30.

Designed to support work-at-home professionals and people that own their own businesses, you will enjoy learning more about the digital world. If you would like to join our webinar, email or send a request by Whatsapp or text message.

**Contact brian@voxcorporation.com or
contact via WhatsApp 07467 542779**



PRIDE IN THE COURT

Social History Project Launches

Earl's Court has long been a culturally significant location, and the area boasts an excellent historical legacy of hedonism and good times.

Once the throbbing hub of Britain's LGBT scene, Earl's Court in the 70s and 80s was the true focal point for the capital's gay community. But more important than that, Earl's Court has always been proud of its diversity and openness.

Looking back to capture this vitally important part of our local social history, it is timely that an Earl's Court photographic and audio history of our neighbourhood's gay times is created and lodged in the Local History Department of Kensington Central Library.

"People came to live here from literally everywhere to work, rest and play. Actors, musicians, film producers - anyone looking to escape a more traditional way of life loved the vibe, loved the scene and loved the edge that Earl's Court offered back then.

This was one of the only places in the country that you could truly be yourself in a free and open neighbourhood. Earl's Court was always slightly set apart from other parts of Kensington and Chelsea and had a village sense of community that accepted diversity and welcomed creativity and expression," says Linda Wade, long time local resident and project coordinator.

In the past 60 years, its clubs, bars and special events became world famous - legendary nights evolved as traditional hosteleries became pounding palaces of joy and laughter. From a whisper to a scream, The Court really did roar from the 1960s onwards.



THE LEGENDARY COLEHERNE

Founded in the 1880s, The Coleherne public house was always a bohemian hang out, and over time it became one of the most famous gay pubs in the country.

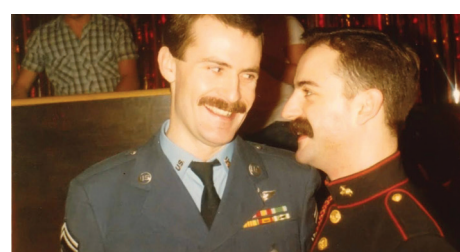
It has been reported that life-long resident of Earl's Court Square, and founding trustee of the Earl's Court Community Trust, Jennifer Ware (RIP) was taken to The Coleherne as a child for Sunday lunch in the 1930s, after which drag entertainers regularly entertained!

60s

In 1964, The Lord Ranelagh Pub, close to Brompton Cemetery kick started great live entertainment here, and it was there that the "Queen of the Month" contest was born. The pub underwent several different incarnations as a gay nightclub, known as Bromptons, and finally as the famous "Infinity" club.

Do you remember Bromptons?

Contact us on editor@thecourt.london to tell us more upload your images to www.facebook.com/groups/857759711339719/



70s and 80s

In the 1970s, The Coleherne became a fabulously notorious Leather bar. Heaving with fun, this once Victorian parlour morphed into something very new. The dark allure of its blacked-out windows attracted a truly exceptional crowd, including celebrities like Freddie Mercury, Kenny Everett and Rudolf Nureyev.

Do you remember the Coleherne Pub?

Contact us on editor@thecourt.london to tell us more upload your images to www.facebook.com/groups/857759711339719/

The late 70s also saw the opening of the first dedicated gay nightclub in the area - The Copacabana. On three three levels with a big garden, this really was something special. The bar upstairs, Harpoon Louie's, ran until the 1980s, and was hailed to be one of the most popular gay bars in London.

Do you remember The Copacabana Club or Harpoon Louie's?

Contact us on editor@thecourt.london to tell us more upload your images to www.facebook.com/groups/857759711339719/



From the heart of Earl's Court, local resident Debbie Imber is taking on the world of the little people!

"We visit playgroups and nurseries around London, and teach little ones how to have their hair cut in a safe, happy and comfortable environment," Debbie Imber tells The Court from her new office in 1A Nevern Place.

"How many parents have spent miserable Saturday afternoons in high street hairdressers with screaming toddlers - parents close to tears, kids literally petrified. That is why we created Tots Crops. We make the whole experience of learning how to have a haircut a really positive one."

Business is going well for local venture Tots Crops. Founded in 2009 the company currently offers haircutting services to leading London nurseries, but plans to grow this to 100 locations in the coming 12 months.

"It is so exciting to be based in Earl's Court and working from 1A I get to meet amazing people - from charity volunteers to fellow small business owners. Being here inspires me and having a dedicated space to work puts me in a really positive frame of mind."

Based on Tots Crops unique proposition and the businesses potential, it is not surprising then that Debbie fought off hundreds of other entrepreneurs to win a prestigious small business competition held by The Times newspaper. The prize? A month of unprecedented access and mentoring opportunities with Mr Woodroffe, who

appeared on the first series of BBC One entrepreneur show, Dragon's Den.

On winning, Mr Woodroffe said it was Debbie's "boundless energy, good humour and courage" that clinched it. "As a panel, we really believed in Deb's ability to make a success of Tots Crops. People who are brave enough to take time out of their busy and already pressurised lives to put themselves in situations such as this, where there is a very real danger of failure, will in fact succeed."

Another judge at the time, former deputy business editor at The Times, Andrew Clarke, said: "These days I'm so used to dealing with

bad business news, so it's been a real pleasure to listen to some inspiring stories of real people succeeding in spite of adversity in this tough market."

We wish Debbie well and look forward to hearing more good news from her and other local businesses that are growing in 2020.

If you are a parent that thinks this service would be great in your child's nursery, or a nursery that would like to learn more about Tots Crops, visit www.totscrops.com or contact Debbie Imber on deborah.imber@totscrops.com or you can call Tots Crops on 0843 289 5988.



STORIES FROM 1A

The Court speaks to Dahabo Isse, CEO and Community Support Worker for Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation, a charity that has supported many members of the community from different backgrounds since 1993.

The Earls Court arm of the Family Support Group of Dadihiye was established in 2018 in direct response to the Grenfell Tower disaster.

“A considerable number of people from our community and service users were directly affected – many had to move to new accommodation and hostels in the south of the borough. This was a terrible time as almost all suffered emotional and psychological trauma after this unimaginable tragedy,” Dahabo explains.

“Because so many people moved away from their North Kensington homes, people in trouble needed support and a convenient way to come and see us, especially those with small children, many of whom found the journey to our North Kensington offices financially and logistically difficult.”

When the group had to find a place to work from and support people they were welcomed by the Earl’s Court Community Trust.

“The Trustees offered us space, initially free of charge, at their 1A Nevern Place offices, and this allowed us to expand our reach and continue the good work we do from our Thorpe Close office.”



In support of the charity, the Trust continues to host the Family Support Group of Dadihiye at 1A Nevern Place. They meet every Monday afternoon, during which they welcome and help up to 30 people weekly.

“From our Earl’s Court office, we provide coffee mornings for socially isolated women. They come and chat and meet together. We also give general, debt advice and offer advocacy, provide language interpretation and support services, and work with Ward Councillors to provide special advice and support. When we have time, we also arrange women’s support health workshops and offer advice on hate crime prevention.”

“The team at 1A really supports us. As well as giving us a safe space to be, the ECCT team offers their help. Toby Brown (ECCT Chair) donated his personal desktop computer, and we have other laptops from

donors to use when we need them. Having free internet is also helpful/ Brian Scudder, ECCT volunteer, publisher of *The Court* and owner of a business called Vox Digital, is always there to help too.”

“We are happy and pray for the ECCT team to be successful in their good work and to be rewarded for the support given to small charities like us.”

About Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation

The organisation offers a wide range of services from their two Kensington offices - 1 Thorpe Close, London W10 5XL and 1A Nevern Place, London SW5 9NR.

Support includes:

Daily drop-in advice services; signposting specialists; legal support workers; Managing Your Money programme; women’s group workshops; Enhance Education - ESOL combined with a sewing class on Tuesdays, a Friendship Programme for older people and Coffee Mornings for women to reduce loneliness.

Dadihiye’s volunteering programme provides skills and experience for young and employed. They also offer a Supplementary School in North Kensington on Fridays.

For details please call Dahabo Isse on 07436270318 or email info@dadihiye.co.uk

It is with great regret that our listings section cannot be included in this issue of *The Court*.

The commencement of all public events will be subject to the advice and guidelines set by Public Health England, so please contact local venues and event organisers to learn more.

Do you have a local initiative we can all enjoy online? Do you have a volunteer group that can support the vulnerable in our area? Contact editor@thecourt.london.



Visit www.thecourt.london and discover some great things to do as we spend time inside!